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Someone

by Daniel Scheffler

EDGE Contributor

Tuesday Sep 10, 2013

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There is something extraordinary about the ordinary. That is after all the premise for the new novel by three-time Pulitzer nominee Alice McDermott, with "**Someone.**" This time the almost invisible warrior is Marie whom we follow through her life starting in the 1920s as a child in Brooklyn along the seemingly banal life lessons and experiences that trot along.

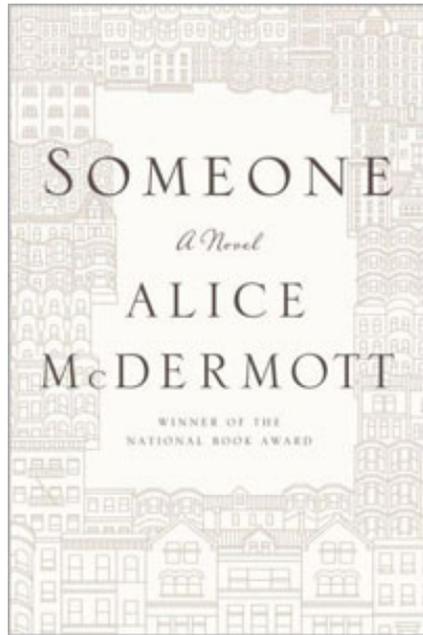
The writer has often been said to use ordinary, simpleton characters, and she does so again. But Marie, in a world of too many super hero movies and big plot lines, feels discreet and sensible. Marie, who falls in love and has children, plods along sincere and engages with herself in a way that fancy prose cannot withstand. The author tosses away the desire to impress and relays a simple feast of bread and butter on a brown paper tablecloth - and with that some reality so inspiring for a novel.

Her previous novel, "Charming Billy" won the National Book Award and McDermott has that same control over empathy with "Someone." Marie uses silence and merciful operations throughout her life as she stands on the edges of her life - a teacup rim that she hides behind, never delving quite into the cup. It's not her brother's sexual orientation, or her work situation at a local undertaker or her children's many stories that are remotely interesting here - it's Marie, only Marie. There is a certain kind of verity that within the character Marie is waiting to be pierced so she can leak it out for the world to lap up. And that is why the book is a page twirl - wondrous.

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McDermott creates a village within a village, a story within a truism. She manages to fall left and right of small minded, little town-ness and present calmly exactly the way humans perhaps by their very nature make their lives smaller and smaller until they are in the small coffin lowered into the ground or slowly into the furnace. And then there is love, Marie (and the other characters) scoot around it and appear to never really hold it out in their hands to bleed at all. The "someone" is that love for the taking.

"Someone"
 Alice McDermott
 \$15.00
 Farrar, Straus and Giroux

by Alice McDermott

Daniel Scheffler is a writer who spends his time in New York, Cape Town and India. Follow him on Twitter @danielscheffler

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